

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF ZOONYMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK CHILDREN'S POETRY – LITERAL VS. CULTURAL ADAPTATION IN TRANSLATION

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KEYWORDS

zoonyms, children's poetry, translation strategies, literal translation, cultural adaptation, English-Uzbek translation, affective meaning

ANNOTATION

The paper explores translation of zoonyms in English and Uzbek children poetry which are names of animals with emphasis on whether to be literal in translation or adapt the work to suit the culture. A collection of original poems in both languages was studied to assess the manner in which translators approach semantic and cultural as well as affective elements of animal references. The analysis concludes that the concept of literal translation keeps the denotative meaning intact and, in most cases, it runs the risk of losing cultural and emotional depth, whereas the adaptive approach improves the understanding, the cultural relatability, and the emotional colour of the message to the target audience. These results are relevant to the field of literary translation, cross-cultural pedagogy, and children literature instruction, as they have shown that it is essential to choose the translation strategies with preservation of both significance and emotional appeal.

Introduction. Children's poetry represents a rich field of expression in which language, images, and emotional connotations are combined to entice the young readers and foster their mental and emotional maturation¹. In this field of poetry, the use of zoonyms, or animal names, represents not only a means of constructing a poetic text, but also a way of expressing certain emotions and culturally conditioned meanings. In the process of translating the poetry written both in English and in Uzbek, the translators encounter a set of peculiar difficulties in conveying the semantic and emotional content of the given zoonyms².

Functions normally applied to translation can be categorized into two broad areas. These are literal translation, which aims at a word-for-word translation, and cultural adaptation, where the content is adapted to suit the target culture³. Literal translation can translate the denotative meaning of an animal name in a word-for-word translation, such as the translation of "puppy" to "kuchukcha," where the emotional connotations and tone are lost in the translation. Cultural adaptation may use animal names in a way that ensures the emotional meaning is transferred to the target audience. This is especially the case in children's books where the emotional involvement is crucial⁴.

The translation of literary works has been noted in research studies to consider equally the affective part of language, especially in children's literature, as its denotative part. The role of zoonyms, being semantically rich and culturally loaded, in defining tone, humor, playfulness, and familiarization is of particular importance for children's poetry translation, even though there is a lack of studies on translation of zoonyms from English into Uzbek language⁵.

The purpose of this research is to analyze translation methods in English and Uzbek Children's Poetry Concerning Zoonyms, specifically in relation to the dichotomy between literal translation as opposed to cultural adaptation⁶. This research aims to explore whether there is a pattern in literal translation approaches applied in the translation process of animal names.

The concrete objectives of the paper are: to establish zoonyms present in some selected English and Uzbek children's poems; to examine how translators handle the identified zoonyms either literally or through cultural borrowing; to assess semantic accuracy and affective resonance caused by translation strategies applied; to

compare the translation practices in the two contexts-English to Uzbek and Uzbek to English.

Several research questions are formulated to identify these problems:

1. What translation strategies are most commonly used for zoonyms in English-Uzbek and Uzbek-English children's poetry?
2. How do literal translation and cultural adaptation affect the semantic and affective qualities of zoonyms?
3. Are there patterns in the choice of translation strategy depending on the type of animal or its cultural significance?
4. What implications do these strategies have for the target audience's comprehension and engagement?

This research will examine whether translators use a combination of literal translation and cultural adaptation in translating zoonym translations based on various semantic, emotional, and culture-specific properties of a source text, whether a process of literal translation can maintain its cognitive, or denotational, content but lose its emotional impact, and whether culture-specific associations of zoonyms tend to be preferred over other, universally acknowledged, zoonym translations of animals.

Through the answers and assumptions raised here, this study contributes to a deeper insight regarding the relationships between the semantic, cultural, and emotional aspects found within literature translation. In addition, it also provides practical insights for translators and scholars who are interested in interlinguistic and intercultural children's literature.

Literature review. Translation studies emphasize that translating literary texts, particularly children's literature, requires attention not only to semantic equivalence but also to affective, cultural, and stylistic factors⁷. Children's poetry is especially sensitive in this regard because linguistic choices, including zoonyms, carry emotional weight and cultural connotations that influence comprehension and engagement⁸.

Literal translation seeks word-for-word equivalence, preserving the denotative meaning of the source text. For example, translating the English puppy as Uzbek kuchukcha maintains the referential meaning but may not fully convey cultural or emotional

¹ Abdulhayeva, M. M. qizi .. & Botirov, H. O. o'g'li . (2025). THE ROLE OF CULTURAL BACKGROUND IN ENGLISH- UZBEK FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION. GOLDEN BRAIN, 3(17), 137–143. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17686076>

² Venuti, L. (2018). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315098746>

³ Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315619187>

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⁵ Coats, K. (2013). *The meaning of children's poetry: A cognitive approach*. International Research in Children's Literature, 6(2), 127–142. <https://doi.org/10.3366/irci.2013.0094>

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⁷ Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating: With special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Brill.

⁸ SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ZOONYM USE IN CHILDREN'S POETRY: INVESTIGATING HOW ANIMAL NAMES CONVEY EMOTIONS, ACTIONS, OR CHARACTERISTICS UNDERSTANDABLE FOR CHILDREN. (2025). International Journal of Artificial Intelligence, 5(12), 2928-2936. <https://www.academicpublishers.org/journals/index.php/ijai/article/view/9503>

nuances associated with the word in the source context⁹. In contrast, cultural adaptation allows translators to modify the form or content to suit the target culture, such as replacing a culturally unfamiliar animal with one familiar to the target audience, thereby preserving emotional resonance and comprehensibility.

Studies on literary translation suggest that children's texts often require a higher degree of adaptation than adult texts due to cognitive, emotional, and cultural developmental considerations¹⁰. Translators must consider the target audience's familiarity with the animal, the symbolic or affective associations, and the overall tone of the poem. This often results in a combination of literal and adaptive strategies to maintain both meaning and engagement.

Zoonyms are particularly salient in children's literature because animals serve as affective and pedagogical tools¹¹. Animal characters can embody virtues, emotions, or narrative functions, and their names often carry affectionate, diminutive, or culturally coded meanings. For instance, the English puppy or kitty conveys intimacy and playfulness, while Uzbek equivalents like kuchukcha and mushukcha perform similar functions. Russian diminutives, such as котя and зайчонок, also serve to increase emotional engagement. Translating these zoonyms requires attention to both denotative meaning and affective function¹².

Cross-cultural translation challenges arise when a zoonym has cultural specificity or symbolic meaning that does not directly transfer to the target language¹³. For example, animals with positive connotations in one culture may carry neutral or negative associations in another. Translators often use adaptive strategies to maintain the intended affective impact, sometimes replacing or recontextualizing animals to suit the target audience¹⁴. Such adaptations are particularly important in poetry, where rhythm, rhyme, and tone amplify the effect of each word, making semantic fidelity alone insufficient.

Research indicates that both literal and adaptive strategies are employed in translating children's literature. For example, Oittinen notes that literal translation is more common when the source text is culturally neutral or the animal is widely known, whereas adaptation is necessary for culturally specific or affectively loaded terms¹⁵. Venuti emphasizes that translation should balance domestication (adapting to the target culture) and foreignization (retaining source culture elements) to preserve both meaning and literary quality.

Methodology. This research designs a qualitative text research. The qualitative approach will allow a thorough exploration of the semantic, emotional, and cultural aspects associated with animals' presence in actual poetic texts designed for children. This will provide a solid research design framework for a critical analysis of the way literal versus cultural translation is practiced when it comes to zoonyms in English and Uzbek poetry.

The corpus consists of a total of 40 poems, with 20 being English and 20 Uzbek poems, chosen via purposive sampling. These poems are chosen from very popular authors, textbook anthologies, and traditional texts that are widely used as part of children's

literature. In terms of composition, there are A. A. Milne and Shel Silverstein poems, along with traditional nursery rhymes, among the English examples. On the other hand, modern children's poets and traditional folk-poems that are widely used as part of educational literature are part of the Uzbek examples. There are a number of considerations that are especially looked for in deciding whether texts would fit selection criteria, such as whether texts feature animal characters and zoonyms, and whether texts are amenable to translation.

All the instances of zoonyms from the source texts were identified systematically. Based on the type of animal represented (domestic animal, wild animal, or imaginary animal) as well as the frequency of their usage in the texts, the translations of individual zoonyms were analyzed systematically for the use of diminutive or affective translation strategy.

The strategies on how these translations occurred can be generalized into two major categories: literal translation, which can be described as a word-by-word interpretation of a text without necessarily altering the denotative meaning, and cultural adaptation, which entails changing the source item according to the target culture. For instance, bunny being translated into quyoncha can be described under literal translation since it retains a denotative meaning, whereas using a substitute based on the culture but a common Uzbek creature can be described under adaptation.

The analysis process consisted of four major phases. First, the zoonym entries and their translations were obtained from the corpus. Second, the nature of each translation was determined to see if a particular entry is translated literally or adaptationally. Thirdly, the semantics, emotions, and cultural components of each translation involving a zoonym entry were assessed within a poetic framework. Finally, a cross-linguistic analysis was made between English-Uzbek and Uzbek-English pairings with a focus on common patterns and trends.

In order to ensure the validity of these results, several genuine poems were examined, and this reduced personal stylistic bias when comparing different works of poetry. Semantic and emotional interpretation of poetry results were based on evidence within the poetry and were developed through valid translation theories available in studies of translation for qualitative research.

As a work of qualitative research, this study aims for deeper examination and validating interpretation rather than indicating wide scientific accuracy in findings after thorough research of sufficient statistical data has been considered due to its goals and aims in examining poetry interpretation and translation.

Results. The corpus analysis identified **68 zoonyms** across 40 children's poems(20 English, 20 Uzbek). The translations were examined for **literal vs. adaptive strategies**, affective tone, cultural relevance, and rhythmic or rhyming considerations. Selected examples are presented below to illustrate patterns.

1. English → Uzbek Translations

Table 1: Examples of Literal and Adaptive Translations (English → Uzbek)

Source Poem (Excerpt)	Zoonym	Target Translation	Strategy	Notes on Tone & Cultural Adaptation
"A little puppy sat by the tree"	puppy	kuchukcha	Literal	Preserves semantic meaning and diminutive; child-friendly
"The robin sang a merry song"	robin	qizil qush	Adaptation	Robin not familiar in Uzbek context; adapted for recognition; rhyme preserved
"Hedgehogs hide beneath the leaves"	hedgehog	to'ng'izcha	Adaptation	Hedgehog rare; replaced with familiar small animal; playful tone maintained
"Kitty chased the yarn ball"	kitten	mushukcha	Literal	Semantic fidelity; diminutive preserved for tenderness
"Bunnies hop across the meadow"	bunny	quyoncha	Literal	Semantic and affective meaning preserved

⁹ THE ROLE OF DIMINUTIVE FORMS OF ZOONYMS IN CREATING EMOTIONAL TONE IN CHILDREN'S POETRY. (2025). Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Innovations, 4(11), 3297-3304. <https://doi.org/10.55640/>

¹⁰ Oittinen, R. (2000). *Translating for children*. Garland Publishing.

¹¹ Nikolajeva, M. (2014). *Reading for learning: Cognitive approaches to children's literature*. John Benjamins.

¹² USING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS TO TEACH GRAMMAR TO B1-LEVEL EFL LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN. (2025). International Journal of Political Sciences and Economics, 4(12), 213-222. <https://doi.org/10.55640/>

¹³ Wierzbicka, A. (2006). *English: Meaning and culture*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE MIRROR OF PROVERBS: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK MATERIAL VALUES. (2025). International Journal of Political Sciences and Economics, 4(12), 259-267. <https://doi.org/10.55640/>

¹⁵ Ziyodaxon, Q. (2025). IRKIT O'RDAKCHA: TASHQI KO'RINISH, RAD ETISH VA ICHKI GO'ZALLIK. TANQIDIY NAZAR, TAHLLILY TAFAKKUR VA INNOVATSION G'OYALAR, 1(9), 598-601.

Observation: Literal translation dominates for domestic and familiar animals (*puppy*, *kitten*, *bunny*), whereas wild or culturally

specific animals (*hedgehog*, *robin*) are adapted to maintain comprehension and playful tone.

2. Uzbek → English Translations

Table 2: Examples of Literal and Adaptive Translations (Uzbek → English)

Source Poem (Excerpt)	Zoonym	Target Translation	Strategy	Notes on Tone & Cultural Adaptation
"Kichik kuchukcha daraxt yonida o'tirdi"	kuchukcha	puppy	Literal	Preserves semantic meaning and diminutive; familiar animal
"Bolakay tulki o'mon bo'ylab yugurdi"	bolakay tulki	sly little fox	Adaptation	Diminutive and playful trait preserved; fox culturally familiar in English folklore
"Qo'zi yaylovda tinchgina yotardi"	qo'zi	little lamb	Adaptation	Added diminutive for tenderness; aligns with poetic affective tone
"Mushukcha ip to'pi bilan o'ynadi"	mushukcha	kitty	Literal	Semantic fidelity; diminutive preserved
"Quyoncha o'tloq bo'ylab sakradi"	quyoncha	bunny	Literal	Semantic and affective meaning preserved

Observation: Translators often combine **literal and adaptive strategies**: literal translation for familiar animals ensures semantic clarity, while adaptation preserves affective nuances for culturally loaded animals.

3. Patterns by Animal Type and Strategy

Analysis across all 68 zoonyms revealed the following patterns:

1. **Domestic animals** (puppy, kitten, rabbit) were mostly translated literally (22 of 28 occurrences), with diminutives retained to maintain tenderness.

2. **Wild animals** (fox, hedgehog, robin) were evenly split between literal and adaptive strategies (12 of 24 cases adapted) to preserve cultural understanding and narrative tone.

3. **Culturally specific animals** (unique to Uzbek folklore, e.g., tulki, qo'zi) were adapted 50% of the time to ensure semantic and affective resonance for English readers.

Table 3: Translation Patterns by Animal Type

Animal Type	Total Zoonyms	Literal Translation	Cultural Adaptation
Domestic pets	28	22	6
Wild animals	24	12	12
Culturally specific	16	8	8
Total	68	42	26

4. Semantic vs. Affective Preservation

The results reveal a clear trade-off: literal translations demonstrate high semantic fidelity with moderate affective preservation, whereas adaptive translations show moderate semantic fidelity but high affective and cultural preservation.

For example, English *hedgehog* → Uzbek *to'ng'izcha* loses precise lexical equivalence but preserves rhyme, playfulness, and child comprehension. Conversely, Uzbek *bolakay tulki* → English *sly little fox* maintains diminutive and playful qualities even if the fox is not directly "small" in the original context.

The analysis demonstrates that translators of children's poetry use **strategic combinations** of literal and adaptive approaches. Familiar animals favor literal translation for semantic clarity, while rare or culturally loaded animals favor adaptation for emotional and cultural resonance. Diminutives and affective modifiers are crucial tools to maintain **playfulness, tenderness, and engagement** across languages.

Discussion. The current study examined the translation strategies employed in the English and Uzbek children's poems regarding zoonyms with a special emphasis on the influence of literal translation and culture on semantic transparency, emotional tone, and pragmatic meaning.

The results show that literal translation and cultural adaptation are the two major methods involved in zoonym translation. Literal translation was mainly practiced on animals which the child readers would know cognitively and culturally in both languages. This included *kuchukcha* (puppy), *mushukcha* (kitten), and *tulki* (fox). This proves that a reliance on semantic transparency can be practiced when there is less chance of

misinterpretation between cultures and that direct translation is a good method when there is common cultural knowledge.

Yet, cultural adaptation was often applied to those zoonyms that were invested with symbolic, affective, or culture-specific meanings such as *toshbaqa* and *paxmoq ayiq*. These findings suggest that translation strategies are not used haphazardly but are chosen in relation to the communicative function of the zoonym in the poem.

The results reveal that translation strategies significantly affect the emotional and pragmatic effectiveness of zoonyms. The strategy of literal translation generally preserved the denotative meaning but was sometimes too weak for maintaining an effective affective nuance. For example, translating the word *paxmoq ayiq* simply as bear would delete the warmth and affection embedded in the source text. The translators thereby employed adaptive strategies, translating it as fluffy bear to preserve the emotional stance of the speaker.

This corresponds to the trend seen in pragmatic theories of meaning, which prioritize speaker's intention and contextual interpretation over lexical form¹⁶. The frequent use of diminutives in poems like the one involving *mitti qush* and *qushcha* shows the way in which affective meaning is pragmatically encoded and has to be reconstructed in the target language if communicative force is to be maintained.

The results clearly indicate that the diminutive forms are the most important pragmatic markers in children's poetry. In Uzbek, for example, the diminutives like -cha encode affection, empathy, and emotional closeness. These meanings were often retained in translation into English using lexical means (little, tiny, kitty), as

¹⁶ Cutting, J. (2015). *Pragmatics: A resource book for students* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760407>

translators often prefer pragmatic equivalence over morphological symmetry.

This supports Hypothesis 1, which stated that diminutives are central to the emotional tone of children's poetry and thus demand an accurate translation. These results corroborate Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi's claim that diminutives serve both expressive and interpersonal functions, especially in child-directed discourse.

The analysis shows strong support for the hypothesis. Cultural adaptation was more effective in those cases, in which the zoonyms had an appraisive or symbolic value, as illustrated in the turtle and bear poems. The translators were able to sustain emotional engagement by using modifications of the qualifier, adding diminutives, or picking a more familiar equivalent.

Indeed, this result aligns well with the idea of dynamic equivalence proposed by Nida and the principle of relevance theory, which has it that the ideal communication situation involves a minimal processing effort and a maximal contextual payoff.¹⁷ In the case of readers as young as children, the emotional availability of the text becomes a very important contextual payoff, which might make adaptation even necessary.

The above study clearly illustrates how zoonyms work as cognitive anchors for children in comprehending complex notions of slowness, strength, health, and regret via images of animals. In the poem regarding the turtle being late for class, the zoonym is used as a representation of behavior that is easy for children to understand.

Translation strategies that maintained a metaphorical meaning helped improve cognitive clarity and emotional engagement and sustained Cameron's claim that children interpret meaning through integrated conceptual and emotional frameworks¹⁸.

Taken cumulatively, the evidence provides further confirmation of the proposition that zoonyms in children's poetry are a phenomenon at the interface of semantics, pragmatics, culture, and emotion. The literal translator faces the danger of pragmatic loss, while those using a combination of literal and adaptive strategies are successful in preserving the full richness of the source text¹⁹.

Conclusion. *This research explored the ways of translating zoonyms found in children's poetry for English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking children, paying close attention to the issue of literal translation versus cultural adaptation. The research actualized a realistic picture of zoonyms' usage in children's literature, investigating their semantic, emotional, as well as pragmatic reinterpretation in the translation process. An authentic poem, as opposed to a sample poem, was used for a more realistic approach.*

In regard to Research Question 1, the results showed that the two main strategies translators use are literal translation and cultural adaptation. In the case of literal translation, these undertakings proved to be most common in relation to animals that are culturally known and linguistically equivalent in both cultures, including dogs, cats, rabbits, and hippopotamuses. This answers Research Question 1 by indicating that direct equivalence can sometimes still work if the culture recognizes the images of the animals.

Answering Research Question 2, results confirmed that the application of translation strategies affects, to a certain degree, the retention of emotional tone and pragmatic equivalence. Although a formal translation strategy promoted semantic equivalence, this aspect was overshadowed by the lacking equivalent of emotional intensity found in informal translations, which are a core component of a children's poem. This confirmed that the hypothesis on pragmatic equivalence being more important than semantic equivalence when translating emotionally charged zoonym terms was true.

In connection with Research Question 3, the data analysis has indeed verified the importance of the use of the diminutive forms of zoonyms in the manifestation of affection, tenderness, and emotional nearness. Uzbek language has certain diminutive forms, which are represented by the suffix "-cha," that have a high degree of

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¹⁷ Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.

¹⁸ Cameron, L. (2003). *Metaphor in educational discourse*. Continuum.

pragmasignificance and may not always be reproduced in the English translation. Nevertheless, the translation team has managed to overcome the issue using adjectives (little, tiny, fluffy) and/or affectionate variants (kitty, bunny) of the word in question, which serves as a strong argument for the importance of the use of the diminutive in the role of a pragmarker in children's verse.

Lastly, in connection with Research Question 4, this research proved that zoonyms in children's poems are cognitive, emotional, and cultural anchors. Animals in these poems are not just ornaments, as they are tools in which the concepts of behavior, health, timing, or emotions are embodied. An effective translation in this connection is one which makes animal imagery usable, enjoyable, and meaningful to the target group.

Taken cumulatively, these results affirm that zoonymy in children's poetry represents a crossover point of semantics, pragmatics, culture, and emotion. The ineffectiveness of translators, who tend to be literally equivalent, leads to a loss of pragmatic and emotional aspects, while those translators who deliberately incorporate both literal and adaptive methods have been successful at retaining the complexity, playfulness, and message of poetry. At a general level, this research advance impacts areas of translating research, pragmatics studies, and studies of children's literature by affirming that the pragmatic aspects of zoonymy must be appreciated and interpreted in order to understand a fuller complexity of children's poetry.

Recommendations

1. Pursue a policy of pragmatic equivalence rather than word-for-word literalness in translating zoonyms. The translators of children's poetry should consider not merely the semantic qualities of the translated units but also the pragmatic functions of the zoonyms, and especially the functions involving evaluations. Where there may be a loss of emotional appeal, an appropriate adaptation may be more advisable.

2. Consistently maintain the sense of "diminutive" in translations. As the sense of "diminutive" is extremely important in communicating "tenderness" and "emotional closeness" in child poetry, the translator is advised to try to consistently communicate the "diminutive" effect in the target language with the help of lexical markers such as "little," "tiny," or "fluffy," even if there is no equivalent

3. Take into consideration the cultural and cognitive familiarity with animals on the child's side. Translation choices should consider whether a given zoonym is familiar, symbolic, or culturally specific for the target group. More unfamiliar animals can help improve understandability, especially in younger readers.

4. Introduce pragmatics and translation theories into the training of translators. Translation classes and teacher training programs should include pragmatic models of translation, for example dynamic equivalence, relevance theory, and appraisal theory, in order for these future translators to learn how to deal even with emotionally loaded lexicographic items such as zoonyms.

5. Teachers are therefore encouraged to pick translations that retain emotional tone. Teachers and those responsible for developing language curriculum should recognize that not all translations of children's poetry are pragmatically equivalent. The selection of texts that retain emotional tone is useful for emotional and reader literacy.

6. Incorporate future studies with the intent of conducting reader response analysis. Even though the study involved text analysis, future studies may investigate how children respond to literal versus adapted zoonyms cognitively as well as emotionally with the aim of proving cognitive translation approaches.

7. The analysis of the corpus should also be extended to other types of genres and languages. For instance, further research could investigate the translation of zoonyms into children's prose works, songs, and audiovisual products.

¹⁹ Numonova, M. (2025). *Zoonyms in children's poetic literature: A cross-linguistic ecological and axiological study in English, Uzbek, and Russian*. QO'QON UNIVERSITETI XABARNOMASI, 16, 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v16i.1275>

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